

CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS



JOE S. FRANK
MAYOR

April 21, 2009

The Honorable Robert J. "Rob" Wittman
Member
United States House of Representatives
1318 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Rob
Dear Congressman Wittman:

I am writing in support of including funding for the Middle Ground Boulevard Extension project in the next Transportation Equity Act reauthorization. This project is critically important for the City of Newport News, the Hampton Roads region, and the Commonwealth of Virginia. **The City of Newport News supports this project as its number one priority for the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU.**

The Middle Ground Boulevard Extension project is a proposed four lane divided roadway crossing over the CSX railroad and connecting Newport News' two main highway arterials in the area of the Oyster Point Central Business District. It will not only provide congestion relief to the existing transportation network but will create a much needed connection from a large residential area on the western side of the City directly to the business district. Several important economic development initiatives are currently ongoing in Newport News, the largest of which is expected to create more than 1,000 jobs. The Middle Ground Extension will serve these vital projects as the City seeks to maintain a healthy economy in these turbulent times.

The Middle Ground project will have environmental benefits as well. The extension of Middle Ground will lessen the City's carbon footprint, improve air quality, reduce smog, and allow for regional sharing of storm drainage facilities. The project also will reduce fuel consumption given that the distance traveled by most commuters along these routes will be reduced from five miles to one mile.

The Middle Ground Extension is contained in the Commonwealth's six-year transportation plan and enjoys extensive support in the local community and in the Hampton Roads region. The cost of the Middle Ground Extension project is

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\$44,747,000. The project is currently in the environmental review process and will undergo a public comment period as required by the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). Previously, \$3,130,677 was provided for this project under SAFETEA-LU. In addition, \$100,000 has been provided for the project under the regional STP. The Commonwealth of Virginia also is expected to contribute significant funding for this project under the state's six-year plan.

Again, I urge you to work to obtain federal funding for the Middle Ground Boulevard Extension. The completion of this project will have a tremendous positive impact on our City and the region. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe S. Frank", written over a horizontal line.

Joe S. Frank
Mayor

JSF/MLK/sjth